

An Essay  
on

# REACTION

Respectfully submitted  
to the

Professors of the

Homoeopathic College,  
of  
Philadelphia.

by  
Thomas Crowell Bunting.

Philadelphia February  
1855



The laws of nature are immutable her truths are uncontradictable and only to be learned by diligent investigation and study. Many have sought to unravel her mysteries, and, but few have attained the desired success. Some have failed by an incorrect knowledge of her first principles, and, many more by incompetent judgement, and from such variations arise the innumerable theories that are found in every department of science trampling the intellect of the student with false hypotheses which originating from rash inferences and ignorant assertions enjoy an



ephemeral brightness until superseded  
by another dogma; then sinks into  
oblivion only to be recalled as a fad  
of a past age, for as soon as one theory  
is proven false another is proposed.

The laws of nature are immu-  
table her truths are uncontradictable  
and only to be learned by diligent  
investigation and study. Many have  
sought to unravel her mysteries, and,  
but few have attained the desired  
success. Some have failed by an in-  
correct knowledge of her first princi-  
ples, and, many more by incompe-  
tent judgement, and from such  
variations arise the innumerable the-  
ories that are found in every depart-  
ment of science traveling the intellect  
of the student with false hypotheses  
which originating from rash inferences  
and ignorant assertions enjoy an



ephemeral brightness until superseded  
by another dogma; then sinks into  
oblivion only to be recalled as a fable  
of a past age, for as soon as one theory  
is pronounced inefficacious for popular  
credence, another perhaps itself equal-  
ly unfounded is promulgated, which  
again in time is crushed into the same  
grave as its predecessor by the revol-  
ving wheel of time: thus showing  
the inability of mankind to account  
satisfactorily for the machinations of  
that all wise Being whose fixed  
laws cannot be either dissipated or  
enhanced by the feeble wisdom of  
humanity.

Perhaps in no art or science  
have theories obtained more credence  
or maintained a wider sway than  
in the practice of medicine: as



early as the time of Hippocrates -  
certain causes were assigned to par-  
ticular effects, and theories were as  
much in vogue in those days as  
at present. Medicines were sup-  
posed to act in different ways by  
different theorists, and, many were  
the explanations given of disease  
by the innumerable followers of the  
healing arts, which enveloped the

While some attributed  
every disease to peculiar spirits in  
the human body, others perhaps,  
equally qualified as these learned  
brethren refuted the gross error, and,  
zealously advocated the humoral the-  
ory. Some supposed stimulents indis-  
pensable as remedial agents, while  
another party were of a contrary  
opinion and upheld a depletive



system. Thus by the spirit of discovery which prevailed at different times many theories originated, and one after another flourished and was forgotten until centuries had passed away in the eager pursuit to discover a law of cure which should be applicable to every phase of disease, and although through the darkness and obscurity which enveloped the medical world at those periods, there occasionally glimmered in the distance the bright light of the true law it was not fully revealed until subsequently discovered by Samuel Hahneman.

In the method of investigation which he adopted by proving medicines on the healthy he found that remedies to cure disease should



also cause similar phenomena in healthy persons to the affection <sup>constituted</sup> which they removed.

This discovery of Hahnemann is evidently a law of nature, being illuminated from experience, and proved by the most convincing facts, for the statistics of public institutions and the innumerable cases of private practice show that its applicability is extensive in the most violent forms of disease, and its effects decisive and beneficial.

But while experience gives the most satisfactory proof that medicines act in accordance with this law, no satisfactory explanation accounting for its precise manner of action has yet been established, although many hypotheses have been put forth to expound



its rationale of cure. Apparently the most reasonable explanation accounts for it by the reaction of the vital powers of the system against the specific quality of the medicine, and here it is proper to enquire, what is understood by the reaction of the system? but to answer the question it will be necessary to explain the subject by a description of some of its principle phenomena by way of illustration.

There is a powerful tendency in all living animal tissues when affected by disease to regain a healthy condition, and, this seems to be brought about by some power derived from the vital force, being necessary for the proper condition and defence of



the animal economy, it being impossible through its agency for diseased action to take place in the system without restraint or progress without giving rise to symptoms, which in all cases denote a resistance against the offending cause, for there can be no symptoms without disease being present and no disease without signs of its existence. By the operation of this vital principle diseased parts are restored to health and the invasion of disease to some degree prevented, for when the body is exposed to malarious influences the reactive power is directed against the peculiar influence of the miasma, from which the malady arises, and while one accustomed to its effects



is not attacked another will be  
stricken down by the disease from  
a too sudden exposure to the contagion.

Thus by cautious and gradual  
exposure to any miasmatic or epidem-  
ic disease the reactive force is in-  
creased in power against the peculiar  
manifestations of the abnormal influ-  
ence; thus guarding against its en-  
croachment.

The power of vaccination and  
the prophylactic virtues of some med-  
icines may be explained according to  
this principle, for a true prophylactic  
must act in a similar manner to  
the threatened disease and conse-  
quently excite the same reaction  
more gradually than a sudden ex-  
posure would. The reaction  
of the system is less during sleep



and therefore disease more readily invades during this state. This is also the case when the body is relaxed by fatigue perspiration mental emotion and other exhausting causes.

Many of the symptoms which arise in disease are of an uncertain and equivocal character while some are more truthful, and clearly point out not only the location, and, extent but to the intelligent observer even the nature and characteristics of the malady. Thus aiding in its diagnosis and prognosis, which is an important end to be accomplished, but symptoms have a still more important use by assisting in the selection



of appropriate remedies.

Every deviation from health is indicated and characterized by symptoms which show the manner in which the vital force acts to remove disease, and, indicates the proper channel through which they are to be removed.

For instance, if in fever a sweat breaks out or any other critical phenomena takes place it should not be suppressed or retarded but encouraged if necessary, for nature always promotes health by overcoming diseased action in the safest and shortest manner. Therefore if the vital force is weakened from any cause such as loss of blood or previous exhaustion a remedy is needed.



which acting in a similar manner as the disease will direct the energies more strongly to the diseased part, thus producing a greater reaction by temporally increasing the abnormal process from the accession of a medical disease, the effects of which being transient, disappears in a short time leaving a more powerful healthward process.

Many do not accept this as a correct explanation, because diseases are often cured by attenuated medicines without a perceptible aggravation of the symptoms: but they forget or at least do not consider that all the tissues implicated by a disease may not be affected



simultaneously but in regular  
order according to the degree of  
sensibility or the progress of the  
abnormal process, thus producing  
a more uniform and pacific  
effect.